

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### STEEL SHOT REGULATIONS FOR WATERFOWL HUNTING AFFECT PORTIONS OF 29 STATES IN 1979

Parts of 29 States in all four migratory waterfowl flyways will be affected by steel shot regulations for the 1979-80 waterfowl hunting season, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said today.

The zones where steel shot will be required for waterfowl hunting next fall were published in the July 17, 1979, Federal Register.

The purpose of requiring waterfowl hunters to use steel shot is to reduce the incidence of lead poisoning in waterfowl. About 2 million waterfowl die of lead poisoning annually in the United States after eating spent lead shot, which the birds mistake for seeds or grit. Steel shot is not toxic to waterfowl.

The steel shot zones are selected on the basis of the amount of shot found in the digestive tracts of waterfowl and on the quantities of lead shot deposited by waterfowl hunters. The Fish and Wildlife Service and the States have conducted extensive studies on these factors over the last several years. The Service cooperates with State wildlife agencies in identifying which areas should be designated steel shot zones.

Detailed descriptions of the specific designated zones for 1979 will be listed in announcements to be issued by the Service's six regional offices. The States in which zones will occur are as follows:

Atlantic Flyway--Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Virginia.

(over)

Mississippi Flyway--Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

Central Flyway--Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas.

Pacific Flyway--Nevada, Oregon, and Washington.

About 20 percent of the waterfowl harvest of the United States occurs within the zones that have been identified for the next waterfowl hunting season.

In some States, non-toxic shot zones are identified by State regulations only. In addition, some National Wildlife Refuges require non-toxic shot for waterfowl hunting. Hunters are advised to check State and refuge regulations for other areas where non-toxic shot is required.

In 1979, steel shot will be manufactured in 12-gauge shells only. As a result, the Service published regulations permitting those using guns other than 12 gauge to continue to hunt in the zones with toxic shotshell loads during the 1979-80 waterfowl season. The exception will terminate after this season and steel shot will be required in all gauges of guns beginning in the fall of 1980.

In 1978, Congress passed legislation prohibiting the Interior Department from enforcing steel shot regulations in any State unless the State wildlife agency approved. Several States did not approve the enforcement of the regulations. This provision will expire September 30, 1979; however, it could be extended into the coming hunting season by Congressional action similar to that of last year.

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